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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR APRIL 24, 2006

¶1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for April 24, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

¶2. BOLGE / OZGUR GUNDEM: Turkish Armed Forces has been preparing to launch a large-scale military operation against PKK at the border area near Yuksekova. Tanks with long shooting range are being located at hills viewing the border area, and Bolu Command Brigade and two brigades from Kayseri have been deployed in the border area. Meanwhile, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said that they would not allow Turkey to carry out cross-border operations.

¶3. OZGUR GUNDEM: Reported Commander of Chief Headquarters of PKK said that Iran and Turkey was working in coordination in a recent attempt to deploy military forces at the borders against PKK. (This summary is from 04/23 editions.)

¶4. CUMHURIYET / HURRIYET: Land Forces Commander Yasar Buyukanit said that the military forces recently deployed in the southeastern region were not much different than the deployments of former years. Buyukanit said, "Our operations have been going on there, and will continue to go on like that as long as PKK existence continues there. That recent military activity is not an extraordinary development." (This summary is from 04/23 editions.)

¶5. SABAH (GUNEY) / SABAH: Chief of General Staff Hilmi Ozkok said that increasing military deployment in the southeastern region was as a result of widening of area where PKK has been launching its activities. Ozkok further dismissed any alleged intervention in the decision process of Higher Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) that dismissed Van prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya from his profession.

¶6. ZAMAN: Office of Chief of General Staff denied allegations on its internet site that Hilmi Ozkok, Chief of General Staff, extended a verbal memorandum to PM Erdogan to dismiss some ministers and a prosecutor.

¶7. OZGUR GUNDEM: A delegation comprised of attorneys from London Bar Association are currently in Mardin's Kiziltepe district to conduct local studies about violent demonstrations which killed two people and wounded several others in the district. The delegation paid separate visits to the local DTP branch, Kiziltepe Municipality, and to the families of the people who died during the incidents.

¶8. SABAH (GUNEY): Ali Coskun, Minister of Industry and Commerce, paid a visit to Diyarbakir. Diyarbakir Mayor Efsan

Ala, Mayor Osman Baydemir, and Yenisehir District Mayor welcomed the minister at the airport. The minister paid a visit to tradesmen whose businesses have been damaged during the violent protests in Diyarbakir at the end of March. Separately, the daily noted that the government started compensating for the losses incurred by tradesmen during such protests in Diyarbakir.

¶9. OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily noted that Minister Ali Coskun displayed a cold attitude that ignored the presence of Mayor Osman Baydemir during his visit to the province. When the Minister invited Baydemir at the last minute to a photo spray at Diyarbakir's Commodity of Exchange together with the governor and Diyarbakir's employers, the employers at the meeting gave a standing ovation reportedly in support for Baydemir.

¶10. ZAMAN / CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Following the decision of HSYK (Higher Board of Judges and Prosecutors) last week to expel Van Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya from profession, it may be that Sarikaya may apply to European Court claiming that HSYK verdict failed to address his case correctly. The daily further states that civil society protested debarment of Sarikaya. According to Cumhuriyet daily, a Turkish juror of the European Court said that debarment of Sarikaya from profession was an issue that must be left to state's own sovereign discretion. The daily interprets the juror's statement as the path to European Court being blocked for Sarikaya. Ozgur Gundem daily reported that European Commission reportedly criticized expelling of Prosecutor Sarikaya from profession and Istanbul chapter of Human Rights Association sent a letter to HSYK to protest debarment of Sarikaya. (This summary is from 04/23 editions.)

¶11. OZGUR GUNDEM: Mazlum-Der (Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for the Oppressed People) National Chairperson Cevat Ozkaya branded dismissal of Prosecutor Sarikaya as an act of intimidation which breaches rule of law, independence of

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judiciary, and equality before law.

¶12. SABAH: Children's Court overturned the indictment prepared by children branch of the Prosecutor's Office which demanded action against 36 children on grounds that those children were members of the terrorist organization. (Note: Ninety-one children were detained in Diyarbakir during the demonstrations that took place between March 30 and 31. Diyarbakir Court released thirty-four of them as they stood trial. Fifty-seven of them are still under arrest. End Note.) A higher court will rule about the final decision on charges to be brought against children in prosecutor's indictment.

¶13. RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: An investigation has been started against Seferi Yilmaz, owner of the bookstore where a bomb attack was carried out last November in Hakkari's Semdinli district, for using a new sign in his repaired bookstore with a logo depicting an image of a bomb with question Marks surrounding it. According to Ozgur Gundem, the image aimed to symbolize the attack carried out at the bookstore which has been reopened on March 18. But legal authorities claim that the sign "has been inciting people to criminal activities." (Ozgur Gundem's 04/23 edition has been used for this summary.)

¶14. OZGUR GUNDEM: Mehmet Sahin, a member of DTP Hakkari Administrative Board, has been detained on Friday evening (04/21) on grounds that he delivered a speech that attempted to disrupt the integrity of the country during an event held at Hakkari about November 2005 Semdinli incident. Sahin has been arraigned and arrested. Meanwhile, Nusaybin chapter of DTP, which was briefly closed following an April 9 police raid at its party building and arrest of eight DTP administrators, will be opened today with reported mass participation of people. Separately, following detention of chairperson of Batman chapter of TUHAY-DER (Association of the Families of Prisoners and Detainees) on Saturday (04/22), police conducted a raid at Batman TUHAY-DER and seized files of the members and a computer. (This summary is from 04/23 edition.)

¶15. ZAMAN: PKK is reportedly planning to launch attacks against 131 diplomatic Turkish missions abroad, a method which was being followed by the Armenian terrorist organization ASALA. Many terrorism specialists in MIT intelligence agency reportedly say that ASALA transformed and integrated itself within PKK. Meanwhile, the daily separately noted that Marxist terrorist organization Kurtulus (Independence) will revive itself again after a period of inactivity to extend support to the PKK.

¶16. OZGUR GUNDEM: Gaziantep Security Directorate's Anti-Terror Branch conducted an operation against Al-Qayda members who were reportedly preparing to launch activities according to a tip-off received by the Directorate. Police detained seven people one of whom was a foreign national.

¶17. OZGUR GUNDEM: Van Chapter of Human Rights Association (HRA) held its 4th Congress at the meeting hall of Van Chamber of Commerce. HRA Van Chairperson, pointing out the increasing military deployment in the Sirnak province, said that Kurdish issues must be resolved through democratic and peaceful methods.

¶18. BOLGE / SABAH (GUNEY): Ali Olgun, Chairperson of Adana chapter of Chamber of Civil Engineers, claimed that there have been attempts to turn the port of Iskenderun into a base that would serve the U.S. Olgun made a call to people to protest such attempts, and also the base in Incirlik.

¶19. SABAH (GUNEY): 100,000 new-Turkish-lira-worth of smuggled technological equipment has been seized by the Customs Protection Directorate at the Habur border gate in Sirnak's Silopi district.

¶20. SABAH (GUNEY): Organized Crime Branch found 2000 ecstasy pills in Diyarbakir hidden in boxes which is normally used for keeping baklava desserts. Police reportedly found books on PKK along with the pills. Eight people have been detained in connection with illegal drug training. In connection with the gang, police seized 3000 pills in Istanbul.

¶21. BOLGE / OZGUR GUNDEM: Orthodox Church in Hatay's Iskenderun district celebrated Easter. Meanwhile, Syrians in Mardin started celebrating Easter as well. Mardin Governor Mehmet Kiliclar, Garrison Commander Fahri Kir, Chief Prosecutor and Mardin's Mufti attended ceremonies held for Easter service.

¶22. OZGUR GUNDEM: Reportedly, six out of 16 people, who attempted to commit suicide in Sanliurfa in the first four months of 2006, have died. Ten of them have reportedly been

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rescued as a result of medical treatment.  
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